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ENG 2009G-004: Literature and Human Values: Faith, Survival, Progress

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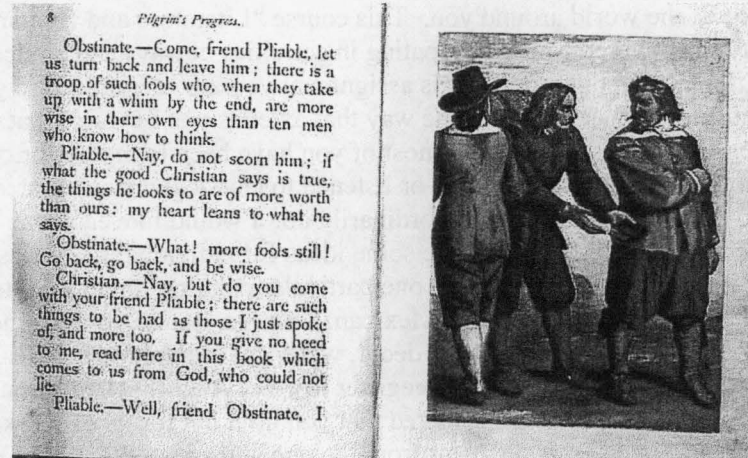
English 2009-004
 "Literature and Human Values: Faith, Survival, Progress"
 Autumn 2004/Coleman Hall 3150

Dr. Dagni Bredesen

Office Hours: M/W 1.30-2.30p and Wed 4.30-5.30p or by appointment

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Course Overview:

In this humanities course, we will be reading literature—both fiction and non-fiction—that represents “life-as-journey.” As they move towards their final destination—often some kind of home—characters endure various tests. Thus, in addition to focusing on how these stories of “faith, survival, and progress” are told, we will also be studying what sustains an individual through these trials. Our texts will include: John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*, Frederick Douglass’ *Narrative*, Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*, Yann Martel’s *The Life of Pi*, Mary Doria Russell’s *The Sparrow*. You will also need a College Level Dictionary to succeed in this course.

One objective of this course is to develop further a critical appreciation of and a confidence in reading and discussing literature and the ways literature speaks of and to the human condition. Furthermore, in this course, you will have many opportunities for extending and enhancing skills in reading, writing, and speaking in general, in ways that will benefit you throughout your University career, and, indeed, your life.

Please note that this class is DISCUSSION-DRIVEN. This means that there is an expectation that each student will be fully prepared for each meeting with the text assigned for the day read and able to initiate or contribute to discussion with relevant and meaningful questions or comments that indicate a serious effort to grapple with the assigned texts and the questions that frame this course.

Course Assignments: To achieve the objectives described above students will need to keep up with the rigorous reading schedule and actively participate in the class discussion. The following assignments will foster the active engagement necessary to make this a productive and exciting learning experience.

I. Exams and Quizzes:

*There will be a mid-term (10%) and a final examination (15%). I reserve the right to give pop quizzes as warranted

II. Papers:

*Three essays based on the readings (15% each)

III. Extending Oneself: (20%):

The word "university" carries with it the idea that part of your education includes an exploration of the universe, that is, the world around you. This course "Literature and Human Values" offers you the opportunity to gain credit for participating in activities in ways that stretch you intellectually, politically, personally. For this assignment you are encouraged to go to an event or performance, a lecture, a concert that in some way that extends you beyond what you have previously experienced. Thus for example, most of you have been to movies or concerts but maybe you have never watched an "art film" or listened to classical music or attended a ballet. I would like you to do things you would not ordinarily do. I would like each one of your individual field trips to be different. Here are some ideas for individual field trips: 1) go to an art museum and look at an exhibit then focus on one particular painting for 15 minutes. 2) go to an ethnic restaurant that serves food other than Mexican, Chinese, Italian, or any other food you are familiar with. Pay attention to the ambience, décor, what you order, how it tastes, etc. 3) do something different; for example give blood, register to vote, volunteer in the community NOT because your fraternity or sorority has mandated that you do it but for its own sake. 4) attend a lecture/presentation in a field that is different from the one you are studying in. 5) other—clear with me.

The experience itself is part one of this assignment. Part two is writing it up in a thoughtful, well-crafted way that clearly describes the experience itself and explains in what ways this experience has taken you beyond your usual realm of experience, and finally reflects on this experience in relation to something we have discussed in class. This paper should be type written, carefully proofread and its length should run 2 to 3 pages.

IV. Key Passages:

These assignments are intended to encourage thoughtful reading of the texts and to help stimulate class discussion. As you read the assigned texts, note passages that seem especially revealing, interesting, perplexing, or controversial in the light of this seminar's topics. When you finish reading the texts for that week choose *one* passage (no more than 4 lines of poetry or 3 prose sentences) and jot it down on a **4X6 index card** along with your name, the date the reading is due, and the author and title of the work in which the passage appears and the section/page number in which it appears. On the back of the card, write a paragraph explaining what you think is taking place, what you think the passage means and why it is significant to the themes of this class. Given the course focus, a good strategy would be to look for examples in the texts in which address one or more of the three terms we are discussing (faith, survival, progress). These passages may be handed in late *only* in cases of excused absence (i.e. absence due to sickness for which a doctor's note is provided, or to participate in an approved University activity).(10%)

Attendance Policy: You may miss 1 class no questions asked, no excuses needed. After 1 class you will drop a grade level, for example, if you were earning a B, you would be dropped to C. If you miss 2 or more classes you will receive a failing grade for this class.

Course Schedule:

Please note this schedule is provisional and subject to change. Also, students should read assigned text(s) prior to the class in which the text(s) will be discussed.

- Week One: Introduction to Class/ Biblical Swoosh
Everyman, an introduction to **ALLEGORY**
- HMWK: Read scholarly introduction to *Pilgrim's Progress* and p 1-141 (that's roughly 22 pages a day, don't leave it all to the last minute)
- Your first key passage should identify a section of *PP* that you think is interestingly allegorically and discuss what is being allegorically represented.
- Fill out study guide and be prepared to discuss where Christian goes, who he meets, and the significance of these places and encounters.
- Week Two: Discuss *Pilgrim's Progress* 1-141 (see above)
HMWK: Read *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* chapters 1-5
- Week Three: *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* **MEMOIR Chapters 1-5**
ETHOS/PATHOS/LOGOS/Intro to Essay #1
- Week Four: *Frederick Douglass* chapters 6-10
"What to the Slave is the Fourth of July"
WRITING WORKSHOP
- Week Five: *Jane Eyre*: Author's Preface and chapters I-IV **NOVEL/BILDUNGSROMAN**
First Paper Due/ intro to Second paper: The Index
- Week Six: *Jane Eyre* chapters V-XXVII **WRITING WORKSHOP**
- Week Seven: *Jane Eyre* chapters XXVIII-XXXVIII
Midterm 45"
- Week Eight: Film: *Black Robe*
Second Paper Due plus index and annotated bibliography
INTRO to *The Sparrow* NOVEL/SCIENCE FICTION
- Week Nine: *The Sparrow* chapters 1-11
- Week Ten: *The Sparrow* chapters 12-22
- Week Eleven: *The Sparrow* chapters 23-32
- Week Twelve: *The Life of Pi* Part One **POSTMODERN NOVEL**
- Week Thirteen: *The Life of Pi* Part Two
- Week Fourteen: *The Life of Pi* Part Three
PREPARE DEBATE CONCERNING WHICH ENDING TO BELIEVE

Week Fifteen: *The Life of Pi* pages 286-326

DEBATE

Final Paper Due

Final Exam (Prep Sheet: 15 questions/12 Exam/ 10 answer)